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Bristol Conservation District P.O. Box 475, 84 Center Street Dighton, MA 02715 508-669-6558 www.bristolcd.org
Cape Cod Conservation District P.O. Box 678 Barnstable, MA 02630 508-771-8757 www.capecodcd.org
Dukes Conservation District P.O. Box 111 West Tisbury, MA 02575 508-645-9734
Essex Conservation District 562 Maple Street Hawthorne, MA 01937 978-774-5578
Franklin Conservation District 55 Federal Street, Room 290 Greenfield, MA 01301 413-772-0384 Ext. 110
Hampden and Hampshire Conservation Districts 195 Russell Street, Suite B6 Hadley, MA 01035 413-585-1000 Ext. 5
Middlesex Conservation District 319 Littleton Road, Suite 05 Westford, MA 01886 978-692-9395 www.middlesexconservation.org
Nantucket Conservation District P.O. Box 1146 Nantucket, MA 02554 508-228-7244
Norfolk Conservation District 400 Main Street Walpole, MA 02018 508-668-0995
Plymouth County Conservation District 15 Cranberry Highway West Wareham, MA 02576 508-295-5151, Ext. 4 www.plymouth.ma.nacdnet.org
Suffolk Conservation District P.O. Box 245 Boston, MA 02121 617-451-9141
Worcester County Conservation District 52 Boyden Road, Room 100 Holden, MA 01520 508-829-4477 Ext. 5 www.seedlingsale.org

Help for new, limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers

The 2008 Farm Bill continues to address the unique circumstances and concerns of farmers who are beginning (farming fewer than 10 years), have limited resources, or who are socially disadvantaged because they belong to racial or ethnic groups that have historically been subjected to prejudice. It provides for voluntary participation, offers incentives, and focuses on equity in accessing USDA programs and services.

- Increased equity under the 2008 Farm Bill:
- Five percent of available Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) acres will be set aside to assist beginning farmers and five percent to assist socially disadvantaged farmers.
 - Increased payments for the costs associated with planning and implementing conservation measures may be available for socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers.
 - Up to 30 percent of such payments may be provided in advance for purchasing materials or contracting.




NRCS and conservation districts: partners in conservation

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is a federal agency that helps people help the land through scientifically based, locally led voluntary conservation efforts.

NRCS works in partnership with Massachusetts' 14 conservation districts, which help identify and address natural resource concerns in local communities, and coordinate public and private resources to meet local needs on a grassroots level.


A conservation district is a division of state government established under state law to conserve and wisely manage resources and partner with state and federal agencies to deliver programs, education and technical assistance to their communities. Visit www.maacd.org to locate your conservation district and to learn more.

 <div>NRCS offices</div>
Massachusetts State Office 451 West Street Amherst, MA 01002 413-253-4350 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christine Clarke, State Conservationist christine.clarke@ma.usda.gov
Barnstable Field Office Serving Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket counties 270 Communications Way, Unit 1G Hyannis, MA 02601 508-771-6476 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Donald Liptack, District Conservationist donald.liptack@ma.usda.gov
Greenfield Field Office Serving Franklin County 55 Federal Street, Room 290 Greenfield, MA 01301 413-772-0384 Ext. 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rita Thibodeau, District Conservationist rita.thibodeau@ma.usda.gov
Hadley Field Office Serving Hampden and Hampshire counties 195 Russell Street, Suite B6 Hadley, MA 01035 413-585-1000 Ext. 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dwane Coffey, District Conservationist dwane.coffey@ma.usda.gov
Holden Field Office Serving Worcester County 52 Boyden Road, Room 10 Holden, MA 01520 508-829-4477 Ext. 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walter Albarran, District Conservationist walter.albarran@ma.usda.gov
Pittsfield Field Office Serving Berkshire County 78 Center Street, Suite 206 Pittsfield, MA 01201 413-443-1776 Ext. 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kate Parsons, District Conservationist kate.parsons@ma.usda.gov
Westford Field Office Serving Essex, Middlesex and Suffolk counties 319 Littleton Road, Suite 205 Westford, MA 01886 978-692-1904 Ext. 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daniel Lenthall, District Conservationist daniel.lenthall@ma.usda.gov
West Wareham Field Office Serving Bristol, Norfolk and Plymouth counties 15 Cranberry Highway West Wareham, MA 02576 508-295-5151 Ext. 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leonard Reno, District Conservationist len.reno@ma.usda.gov

Is this land your land? You need a conservation plan.



A Guide to the 2008 Farm Bill Conservation Programs in Massachusetts

<div>What is the 2008 Farm Bill?</div> <p>The <i>Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008</i> – also known as the 2008 Farm Bill – contains new conservation provisions that simplify existing federal programs while maintaining the conservation-based emphasis developed during the preceding two Farm Bills.</p> <p>National priorities remain similar to the 2002 Farm Bill. These priorities include reducing non-point source pollution, soil erosion and emissions; conservation of ground and surface water; and protection of at-risk species. Massachusetts continues to offer innovative practices for greenhouse, aquaculture, cranberry and organic producers.</p> <div><div>Additional assistance is available for new, limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers (see back page).</div></div>	<div>Program priorities in Massachusetts</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water quality and conservation• Sustainable forest management• Soil quality and Integrated Pest Management (IPM)• Air quality and energy conservation• Invasive species control• Wildlife habitat enhancement	<div>2008 Farm Bill conservation programs</div> <div>Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)</div> <div>Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)</div> <div>Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)</div> <div>Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)</div> <div>Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)</div> <div>Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)</div> <div>Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)</div> <div>Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)</div> <div>details inside...</div>
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NRCS 2008 Farm Bill Programs in Massachusetts

The chart below describes the programs authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill and available through NRCS in Massachusetts. These conservation programs help reduce erosion, protect water quality in streams and rivers, restore and establish wildlife habitat and improve air quality on our nation’s lands. For more information contact your local USDA Service Center listed on the back page of this pamphlet or visit us online at www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

Program	Description	Who is eligible? What land is eligible?	Length and type of agreement	Financial incentives provided by USDA *	Participant obligations	What’s new?
Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Conservation Planning	CTA provides conservation planning services to private and public individuals, groups and entities.	Individuals, groups, entities and units of government who own and/or manage land.	Cooperative agreement with local Conservation District	No payments are provided. Technical assistance is provided free of charge.	Directly participate in the planning process by providing information about your land and developing goals for your farm or forest lands.	N/A
Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)	AMA helps mitigate the risk of drought to farms through new irrigation systems.	Individuals, groups or entities who own or manage non-irrigated farmland with droughty soils.	2 - 10 year contract	Compensation for implementing certain irrigation practices.	Install and maintain conservation practices to NRCS standards.	\$50,000 annual payment limitation.
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	CSP rewards farmers who are good conservation stewards of their land, and offers compensation for enhancements.	Individuals, groups or entities who own or manage farmland with existing conservation practices and that is not already enrolled in WRP or GRP.	5 year contract with possible renewal	Annual payments for maintaining, and compensation for enhancing, existing conservation practices.	Maintain or increase level of land stewardship.	Enrollment opened to all U.S. areas. Organic producers encouraged to apply Formerly the Conservation Security Program
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	EQIP helps promote farm and forest production by enhancing the environmental quality of soil, water, air, plants and animals.	Individuals, groups or entities who own or manage farmland, pastureland or non-industrial forest land.	2 - 10 year contract	Compensation for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Beginning, limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers may be eligible for higher payment rates.	Install and maintain conservation practices to NRCS standards.	Payments are limited to \$300,000 over a six year period. Emphasis on forest management, organic farming, pollinator habitat, air quality and energy conservation. Payments for forest, wildlife, IPM and energy plans.
Farm & Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)	FRPP works in partnership with the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program to protect agricultural lands through the purchase of development rights.	Individuals, groups or entities who privately own farmland that contains productive soil resources, and has a pending offer from an eligible entity, such as the state APR program.	Permanent easement	NRCS contributes 50 percent of the easement purchase based on appraised fair market value.	Maintain or increase level of agricultural land use.	The program's purpose changed from protecting topsoil to protecting agricultural use.
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)	GRP offers compensation for landowners to protect, restore and enhance grasslands.	Individuals, groups or entities who own or control land that historically has been dominated by grassland, forbs or shrubland. Publicly owned lands are not eligible.	Permanent easement or 10, 15, or 20 year rental contract	Compensation for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Rental contract: annual payments for the length of the contract Permanent easement: property's fair market value, less the grazing value.	Maintain grasslands as agreed. Install and maintain restoration practices to NRCS standards.	\$50,000 annual payment limitation for restoration agreements. No minimum acreage requirement Grazing management plan is required
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	WRP promotes the protection and restoration or wetlands through the purchase of easements and enhancement activities.	Individuals, groups or entities who privately own farmed wetlands, land that has become wetland or that contribute to adjacent wetlands. Land must be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits. Publicly owned lands are not eligible.	30 year easement, permanent easement or 10 year restoration agreement	One time easement payment based on fair market value or a Geographic Area Rate Cap. Compensation for the costs of wetland restoration.	Maintain or restore wetlands as agreed. If restoration is needed, assist with the cost. Install and maintain restoration practices to NRCS standards.	\$50,000 annual payment limitation for restoration agreements.
Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)	WHIP helps improve fish and wildlife habitat and restore natural ecosystems.	Individuals, groups or entities who own or manage farmland or non-industrial forest land. Publicly owned lands are not eligible.	2-10 year contract or 15 year critical habitat agreement	Compensation for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Payments for the costs of critical habitat agreements. Beginning, limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers may be eligible for higher payment rates.	Improve or restore wildlife habitat as agreed. Install and maintain wildlife practices to NRCS standards.	\$50,000 annual payment limitation. Increased cap on long-term agreements

* A current list of eligible conservation practices and payment rates will be posted on our website: www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

FAQ frequently asked questions

How do I begin working with NRCS?

Contact your local USDA Service Center to speak with one of our conservation professionals. Contact information is on the back page, or visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

Who is eligible to apply for NRCS Programs?

Eligibility requirements vary slightly depending on the program. Our programs are generally directed towards producers on agricultural and forest lands. There are some exceptions, so please contact your local NRCS office to discuss your situation.

For most NRCS programs, you will need to complete several forms and meet additional eligibility criteria. The following forms are available on our website or by calling an office:

- AD-1026: Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation Certification
- CCC-926: Adjusted Gross Income Certification
- CCC-901: Entity and Joint Operation Membership (for certain applicants only)

Are NRCS programs voluntary?

Participation in all NRCS programs is completely voluntary; however, NRCS programs providing financial assistance require complying with the terms of a contract.

If I enroll my land in an easement program, do I retain ownership?

If you enroll your land under an easement or rental contract, you retain full ownership of the land. Your participation in the program will restrict some uses of the land during the terms of the agreement, but you maintain control of public access.

Glossary

Agricultural land: Cropland, grassland, pasture and other agricultural land on which agricultural and forest products or livestock are produced and where resource concerns can be addressed.

Beginning farmer: A farmer who has been farming fewer than 10 years.

Conservation practice: A structural, vegetative or management measure taken to maintain or improve the condition, productivity, sustainability or usability of targeted resources. Examples of conservation practices include cover crops, nutrient management, manure storage facilities and wildlife habitat improvement.

Contract: A binding agreement for the transfer of financial and technical assistance from NRCS for the installation and maintenance of specific conservation practices as scheduled and agreed to by NRCS and the participant.

Easement: An interest in land defined and delineated in a deed whereby the landowner conveys all rights, title and interests, but the landowner retains rights specifically reserved in the easement deed contract.

Limited-resource farmer: Determine your eligibility using the online tool at: www.lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/tool.asp

Non-industrial forest land: Rural land that has existing tree cover or is suitable for growing trees; and is owned by any non-industrial private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian tribe, or other private legal entity that has definitive decision-making authority over the land.

Rental contract: A legal document that specifies the obligations and rights of the participant including annual rental payments to be provided to the participant.

Socially disadvantaged: People who belong to racial or ethnic groups that have historically been subjected to prejudice.